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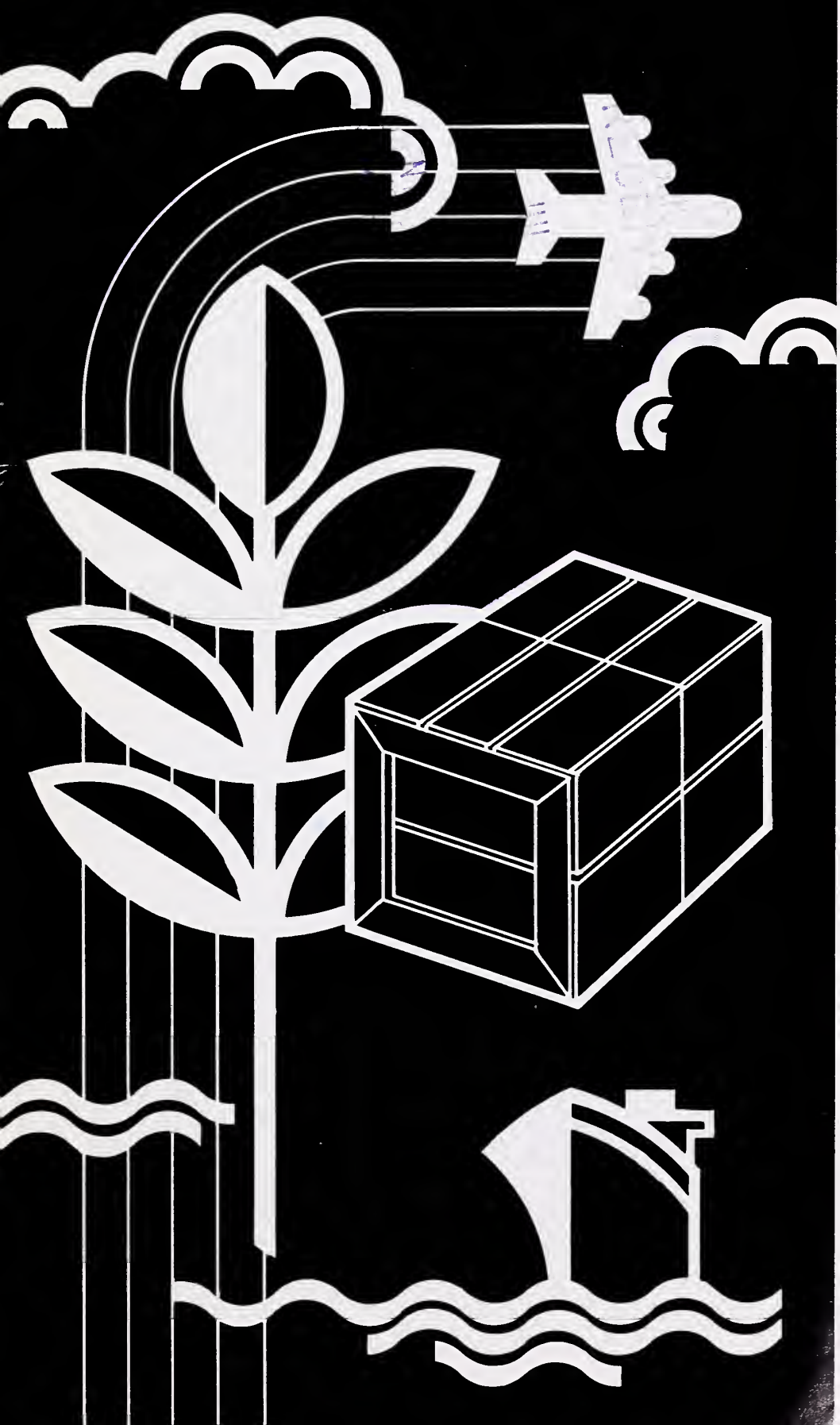
Agriculture

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Plant Protection and Quarantine

Program Aid 1162

# Shipping Foreign Plants Home



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## Shipping Plants Simplifies Importation

There is a simple way to import plants that you admired overseas: Secure a permit in advance and ship them home. This avoids delays at the port when you return from your trip and improves the chance that your plants will survive the trip and get a good start in their new location.

## Protecting America's Animal Health

Many destructive plant pests now posing problems to U.S. producers originally were “foreigners” that entered on incoming plants. Pests like the alfalfa weevil, citrus bacterial canker, the golden nematode of potatoes, the Russian wheat aphid, and many others originally were imported. The plants or plant materials you import could be carrying more such foreign plant pests, making agricultural inspection of incoming plants an important precaution. Not having these inspections could cause serious harm to U.S. agriculture.

To inspect the plants you ship home, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) maintains 14 plant inspection stations at various ports of entry into the country. At these stations, specially trained inspectors in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) carefully examine your plants for insects and diseases. Infested plants are either treated or destroyed.

## Securing a Permit

All plants you import for growing or propagation require a permit. For some, you also may have to make arrangements for a postentry quarantine, requiring that you grow the plants subject to APHIS supervision and inspection.

Along with your permit, you can secure a “priority passport” for your plants, a green-and-yellow mailing label available from APHIS. A package with the distinctive label gets directed quickly to the plant inspection station and is forwarded soon after to its destination.

Some plant materials don't require permits. There's no advantage to mailing them, and you can carry them with you as personal baggage when you enter the country; you have to do nothing further than to include them in your Customs declaration and show them to a USDA inspector at the port of entry.

Other materials are prohibited, and there's no point in your even trying to ship them. See below for a list of commonly imported materials and their entry status.

To be sure whether you need a permit and to secure the proper form, labels, and instructions, write:

Permit Unit  
Plant Protection and Quarantine  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Federal Building  
Hyattsville, MD 20782

Here is a list of common plant materials and their entry status:

Flower bulbs—In general, admitted. Must be free of soil. Anemone bulbs from Germany and gladiolus bulbs from Africa, prohibited.

Flowers—Fresh cut or dried, generally admitted. Fresh camelia and gardenia, prohibited into Florida, treatment required in California. Chrysanthemums from Venezuela and protea from South Africa and Swaziland, prohibited.

Plants—All plants in soil, prohibited. Most kinds of dried plants, flowers, and leaves for herbarium or decorative purposes, admitted. Live plants, shrubs, trees, and fresh cuttings, either prohibited or permit required. Postentry quarantine may be required.

Seeds—of flowers, shrubs, trees, and other plants, admitted in general. Tree and shrub seeds require a permit.

Packing materials—Peat moss, sphagnum moss, wood shavings, sawdust, paper, and excelsior, admitted. Grass, straw, and similar unprocessed plant materials, prohibited.

There are exceptions to the above list. For example, requirements may differ for materials brought in from Canada, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. Also, procedures may differ for large commercial shipments. Such exceptions emphasize the importance of checking with APHIS in advance.

## **Inspection Station Treatments**

APHIS inspectors treat your plants with professional care, even though your materials are only a small proportion of the 247 million plants they examine in a year's time. Fumigation or other treatment is applied only when pests are found or when individual inspection is impractical. Every precaution is taken to minimize damage. Strict guidelines are followed and specific treatments are prescribed for different plant groups and pest types.

Every effort is made to expedite inspection and treatment of plants. Most shipments are released the same day they are received.



## **Tips for Buying, Handling, and Shipping**

The general suggestions below can guide you in buying, handling, and shipping plants. They will help your plants survive the trip home, clear through APHIS inspection, and thrive in your collection. You can obtain further tips on shipping and transplanting from plant societies.

**Buying.** Be selective about the plants you buy. Plants that grow well in a foreign location may not do well in your garden or your greenhouse. For example, plants from a high altitude may not survive at sea level.

Buy from reputable dealers when you make your purchases overseas. APHIS inspectors find that some foreign dealers consistently sell pest-free plants; others sell plants that are always "buggy." Plants collected from the wild and those not grown in the greenhouse are most likely to require treatment before being admitted into the United States.

**Cleaning and inspection.** Remove all soil, other growing media, or forest litter from all parts of plants before you ship or bring them home. Plants arriving with sand, soil, or earth will be refused entry. However, epiphytic plants (such as some orchids) established on tree-fern slabs or similar soil-free media may be admitted.

Inspect your plants carefully and discard those obviously diseased or infested with insects. Do not attempt to remove insects or disease symptoms in order to get the plants through APHIS inspection. The end result could be introduction of the insect or disease into your collection.

Do not treat plants yourself. Chemical residues can endanger the health of APHIS inspectors or camouflage a pest problem. Nonprofessional treatment may be ineffective and unnecessarily stress, weaken, or kill your plants. Plant inspection station treatments are given only when necessary and are specific for the pest to be controlled.

**Packaging for shipment.** Improper packaging is the most common cause of plant death or deterioration during shipment. APHIS inspectors frequently find plants jammed into small containers, turned to mush in plastic bags, or damaged by use of nonprotective containers.

Plants are best shipped while dormant. In this state, they can best withstand temperature extremes, dehydration, and other rigors of transit, and the effects of treatments at the inspection station.

Use a sturdy container for shipment. Wooden crates or native baskets are recommended. Cardboard boxes can be used but are more easily crushed. Pack the plants loosely, using crumpled newspaper or excelsior to protect them from bruising and to allow free air movement.

Never enclose the plants in plastic bags or in containers wrapped in or coated with a moisture barrier such as plastic or foil. Too much or too little moisture promotes rot or other deteriorating conditions.

**Mailing.** To minimize delay and expense, you may mail plant materials directly to an APHIS plant inspection station, preferably by air parcel post.

Some pointers:

- Use APHIS's green-and-yellow mailing label to assure prompt handling of your package.
- Mark the outside of the package to show its contents.
- Send the package early in the week to avoid postal delay on the weekend. Reducing transit time increases the likelihood that your plant will survive the trip.
- Enclose a sheet of paper with your name, home address, and permit number inside the package. After clearance, the package will be forwarded to you without additional cost. Import duties assessed will be collected at your local post office.
- Send the package to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, APHIS, PPQ, at one of the following addresses:

ARIZONA  
102 Terrace Ave., Rm. 116  
Nogales, AZ 85621

NEW JERSEY  
209 River Street  
Hoboken, NJ 07030

CALIFORNIA  
(Los Angeles Int'l Airport)  
9650 S. La Cienega Blvd.  
Inglewood, CA 90301

NEW YORK  
(John F. Kennedy Int'l Airport)  
Plant Inspection Station,  
Cargo Building 80  
Jamaica, NY 11430

(San Francisco Int'l Airport)  
P.O. Box 250009  
San Francisco,  
CA 94125-0009

PUERTO RICO  
(Commercio St., So., Room 4)  
P.O. Box 3386  
San Juan, PR 00904

(U.S. Border Station)  
P.O. Box 43-L  
San Ysidro, CA 92073

TEXAS  
(Border Services Building)  
P.O. Box 1500 E  
Brownsville, TX 78520

FLORIDA  
Plant Inspection Station  
P.O. Box 592136  
Miami, FL 33159

(Cordova Border Station)  
3600 East Paisano, Room 172-A  
El Paso, TX 79905

HAWAII  
P.O. Box 50002  
Honolulu, HI 96820

(1000 Zaragoza St.)  
P.O. Box 277  
Laredo, TX 78040

LOUISIANA  
U.S. Custom House  
423 Canal Street  
New Orleans, LA 70130

WASHINGTON  
Federal Office Building,  
Room 9014  
Seattle, WA 98104

## Cooperation Makes Sense

Complying with import and permit requirements makes good sense. You safeguard your own plant collection while also protecting the Nation's crops, forests, lawns, gardens, and environment. Your cooperation is needed whether you are a collector, a hobbyist, a commercial grower, or a researcher.

You may think, "My one plant can't hurt," and try to smuggle plants through inspection. But just one plant can be the means of introducing a highly destructive insect, pest, or disease.

Customs and USDA inspectors are serious about enforcing the laws. Together, the two agencies look into the luggage and personal effects of incoming travelers, and in the process they catch thousands of smugglers. In a typical month, they impose about \$30,000 in \$25 or \$50 fines for agricultural import violations.

## Endangered Plants

Orchids and other rare and endangered plants are also subject to import restrictions under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

For further information, contact:  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Office of Management Authority  
P.O. Box 27329, Central Station  
Washington, DC 20038-7329

## Additional Publications

"Travelers' Tips On Bringing Food, Plant and Animal Products into the United States—PA 1083." Send your request to: "Travelers' Tips," U.S. Department of Agriculture, G-110 Federal Building, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

"Custom Hints for Returning U.S. Residents—Know Before You Go". Send your request to the U.S. Customs Service, P.O. Box 7474, Washington, DC 20044.

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